

In the claims:

1. (currently amended) A modular deck panel apparatus for a deck structure including a plurality of underlying joist elements, each one of said plurality of joist elements having a top longitudinal surface, said modular deck panel apparatus comprising:

a plurality of modular panels, each of the plurality of modular panels having a first substantially planar element being relatively inflexible, each of said plurality of modular elements having a thickness dimension;

a second substantially planar element disposed beneath the first planar element and secured thereto, said second planar element being relatively flexible in relation to the first planar element; and

a plurality of elongated members, a first portion of the plurality of elongated members being secured with fasteners passing through apertures in the elongated members and into at intervals along top longitudinal surfaces of a series of underlying joist elements, each of said first portion of the plurality of elongated members extending along a top surface of an associated joist across multiple modular panels, and a second portion of the plurality of elongated members spanning between successive at least three joist elements and engaging the first portion of the plurality of elongated members to restrain the plurality of modular panels, said first portion of the plurality of elongated members extending upwardly away from the top longitudinal surfaces of the joist elements to a predetermined height, said height being substantially less than the thickness dimension of the modular panels, and a gap distance between adjacent pairs of modular panels being substantially less than the thickness dimension of the modular panels.

2. (previously amended) A modular deck panel apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the first planar element is either a natural stone product or a cement-based product.

3. (previously amended) A modular deck panel apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the second planar element is a fiberglass composite structure.

4. (currently amended) A modular deck panel apparatus for a deck structure including a plurality of horizontal joist elements, said modular deck panel apparatus comprising:

a plurality of modular panels, each having a first substantially planar element being relatively inflexible and of a material selected from among the group including: stone, mineral, tile, and concrete product, each of said plurality of modular elements having a thickness dimension;

a second substantially planar element of a material different than the first planar element, said second planar element being disposed beneath the first planar element and coupled thereto, said second planar element having a predetermined total area, said second planar element supporting the deck panel upon the deck structure at a panel support area, said panel support area being substantially smaller than the predetermined total area; and

a plurality of elongated members, a first portion of the plurality of elongated members being secured with fasteners along top longitudinal surfaces of a series of horizontal joist elements, said fasteners passing through apertures in the elongated members, said first portion of the plurality of elongated members extending along the top longitudinal surfaces across multiple modular panels, and a second portion of the plurality of elongated members spanning between successive at least three joist elements and engaging the first portion of the plurality of elongated members to restrain the plurality of modular panels, said first portion of the plurality of elongated members extending upwardly away from the top longitudinal surfaces of the joist elements to a predetermined height, said height being substantially less than the thickness dimension of the modular panels, and a gap distance between adjacent pairs of modular panels being substantially less than the thickness dimension of the modular panels.

5. (previously amended) A modular deck panel apparatus of claim 4 wherein the first planar element is adhesively secured to the second planar element.

6. (previously amended) A modular deck panel apparatus of claim 4 wherein the second planar element is of a composite material.

7. (previously amended) A modular deck panel apparatus of claim 4 wherein the panel support area is proximate to a periphery of the deck panel.

8. (previously amended) A modular deck panel apparatus of claim 4 wherein the panel support area is proximate to a pair of opposed edges of the deck panel.

9. (previously amended) A modular deck panel apparatus of claim 4 wherein the first planar element and second planar element are equivalent in size.

10. (previously amended) A modular deck panel apparatus of claim 4 wherein the first planar element and second planar element are generally square in shape.

11. (previously amended) A modular deck panel apparatus of claim 4 wherein panel support areas cooperate with portions of the horizontal joist elements of the deck structure.

12. (currently amended) A deck structure comprising:

a deck frame including a series of joists arranged at a generally uniform spacing; and

a plurality of modular panels secured to said deck frame by a plurality of elongated members, a first portion of said plurality of elongated members having a series of apertures defined thereupon, each of the first portion of said plurality of elongated members being secured to an associated one of the series of joists with a plurality of fasteners passing through the series of apertures to a series of joists along top longitudinal surfaces thereof, said first portion of the plurality of elongated members extending across multiple modular panels, and a second portion of said plurality of elongated members extending across successive at least three joists and engaging the first portion to support the plurality of modular panels against lateral movement, each panel being of a composite layered construction including a top side and a bottom side, each panel including a first layer element defining the top side and of a material providing substantial compressive strength and limited tensile strength, each panel further including a second layer element defining the bottom side and coupled to the first layer element, said second layer element of a material providing substantial tensile strength, and said first portion of the plurality of elongated members extending upwardly away from the top longitudinal surfaces of the joist elements to a predetermined height, said height being substantially less than a thickness dimension of the modular panels, and a gap distance between adjacent pairs of modular panels being substantially less than the thickness dimension of the modular panels.